

ANALYSIS

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ANALYSIS COMPETITION FOURTH "PROBLEM"

A report on the third "problem" set for solution in ANALYSIS for January 1953, together with any winning entries, will be published in the next issue of ANALYSIS for October 1953.

The fourth "problem" is set by Professor Gilbert Ryle of Oxford University, and is as follows:

"If a distraction makes me forget my headache, does it make my head stop aching or does it only stop me feeling it aching?"

Entries (of not more than 600 words), accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope or international stamp voucher, should be sent to **The Editor of Analysis by Wednesday, September 30th, 1953.** *No entries should be sent to Professor Ryle.* Contributors may submit entries either under their own names or a pseudonym. A report, together with any winning entries, will be published, if possible, in ANALYSIS for December 1953.

THE EDITOR.

WAKING AND DREAMING¹

By L. E. THOMAS

In his first Meditation Descartes has the following passage:

"... How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place, that I was dressed and seated near the fire, whilst in reality I was lying undressed in bed! At this moment it does indeed seem to me that it is with eyes awake that I am looking at this paper; that this head which I move is not asleep, that it is deliberately and of set purpose that I extend my hand and perceive it; what happens in sleep does not appear so clear nor so distinct as does all this. But in thinking over this I remind myself that on many occasions I have in sleep been deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection I see so manifestly that there are no certain indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep that I am lost in astonishment. And my astonishment is such that it is almost capable of persuading me that I now dream."

¹ This paper was submitted when Miss Macdonald's article "Sleeping and Waking" (*Mind* for April, 1953) was already in the proof stage. I find myself in complete agreement with what Miss Macdonald has said. The best excuse for this much slighter treatment of the same topic is that it deals in a somewhat different way with some of the points which Miss Macdonald has discussed, and this may provide an added though faint illumination.

This passage contains three points that call for special note. They are (i) that dream experiences are illusory; (ii) that we possess no infallible criterion for deciding whether we are awake or dreaming; and (iii) that we are never in fact certain whether we are awake or dreaming.

Let us examine Descartes's claim as set forth in the passage quoted above. Two distinct questions can be asked at the outset. These are: (1) Are we *in fact* ever in any doubt as to whether we are dreaming or awake? and (ii) If we never are in fact in doubt, can we nevertheless subject our experience to methodological doubt?

I will consider the first question first. This question resolves itself into the two subsidiary questions (a) Do we ever in fact doubt when we *are having* the experience? and (b) Do we ever doubt whether we *were* awake or dreaming when we recollect the experience? I will deal with the two subsidiary questions in the above order.

So far as I can judge from my own experience, I have never been in any doubt whether I have been awake or dreaming. Certainly in my dreams, so far as I remember, the question has never arisen; and in my waking life the only time the question ever occurred to me was when I became acquainted with Descartes, and even then no real doubt was awakened in me. But then I may have been very fortunate (or not, as the case may be), or very gullible, or very insensitive, and so on. Suppose then that I never have felt any doubt in the matter, the fact that I have not doubted so far is in itself no guarantee that on some future occasions I may not have reason to doubt. The question therefore arises, what kind of reason could conceivably give me cause to doubt?

I have often been in doubt as to elements in my experience. Is that the bus I have been awaiting now looming up through the fog or is it a lorry? Is that a book lying over there on the grass or is it a box, or what? The instances are many and varied. Add to these the instances where I thought I recognised what I perceived and then found that I had been mistaken. There are further the innumerable conceivable instances where I might well have doubted whether what I perceived was really what it seemed to be, or where I might have found I had been mistaken if I had taken any interest in what I perceived. The fact that I entertained no doubt in these latter cases was because they were of no practical interest to me at the time; I was not called upon to make up my mind about them.

The occurrence of a genuine doubt as to certain elements in

my experience could have either one of two causes. I might doubt whether the object looming through the fog was a bus or lorry because I did not perceive enough of it to enable me to identify it with sufficient precision for my purpose. My purpose might, of course, be satisfied with various degrees of precision. If I am waiting for *any* bus, then I will be satisfied when I can identify the object as a bus or not a bus. If I want a bus for a particular destination, then I will need to be more precise in my identification, and if I want a bus of a particular transport company and to a particular destination I have to be more precise still. Or I might be in doubt as to a particular perceived object because it does not somehow fit into its context. If I see what appears to be Mr. Smith approaching down the street when I have good reason to believe that he is actually on the other side of the globe, then I will tend to doubt that it is Mr. Smith until I perceive enough of the gentleman to satisfy me that he is indeed Mr. Smith. Or if I see a conjuror producing an egg from a small boy's ear I may well doubt, in spite of all appearances, that this is actually such as it appears to be. For from what I know of eggs and little boys' ears, this apparent relationship between a member of each of these two classes of objects does not hang together with the rest of my experience.

Now I know in all three instances mentioned above how I may resolve my doubts. I can do so by further observations. When I am in doubt whether the approaching object is a bus or lorry, I may begin by suspending my judgment. Then, if an appropriate decision is urgent, I may, before I have had the chance of making all the additional observations necessary for me to be reasonably certain whether it is a bus or not, decide one way or another on much less than adequate additional information. Similarly with the other two instances. If I make all the additional observations that are at least in principle open to me I can resolve the doubt occasioned by the apparent incongruity of what I am at the moment observing. But, of course, I can stop short of fully adequate investigation if there is weighty reason why I should come to some decision before I am quite certain. It may be imperative that I avoid Smith, if it is indeed he, by darting down a side street; and it may be highly desirable that I should purchase eggs from a shop before closing time and before I can fully satisfy myself that my young son's ears are not a reliable alternative source of supply.

But I would not doubt on any occasion whether I was awake or dreaming for any of the above reasons. If when I was presumably awake I was in any doubt as to whether I was not really

dreaming, then no supplementary observations could help to resolve my doubts one whit. For if I were indeed dreaming then any additional observations would themselves be dream observations; and if I were awake but supposed myself to be dreaming any further observations of mine would bear the same general characteristics as my original observations and might therefore be equally supposed to be dream observations. And while I might be in doubt as to the real nature of what I observe because it appears incongruous with the rest of my experience, I could not doubt whether I am awake or dreaming for the same reason. For I should be concerned not with an element in my experience apparently incongruent with its context, but with my experiencing itself which has no context.

To feel any doubt whether I am awake or dreaming and thus to be able to raise the question seriously would imply therefore that I must somehow stand outside my experience and ask a "waking" question about it. But if I could so stand outside my experiencing, I should have no better reason for supposing that my "outside" thoughts were waking ones than that my first-level ones were.

One should perhaps note in passing the occurrence of expressions like "Are those really so-and-soes that I see there, or am I dreaming?" I do not at all think that the use of such expressions betokens any real doubt on the user's part any more than I take literally someone's report that he hadn't known whether he was standing on his head or his feet.

It seems to me therefore that we never actually experience any doubt whether we are waking or dreaming *when* we are waking or dreaming (and the same seems to be true of other mental states such as remembering and imagining) and that consequently the question never arises as a practical question. I say *practical* question advisedly because the resolving of the kinds of doubts we do have as to the real nature of what we observe within the total context of our experience will have practical consequences for us whether we rightly or wrongly resolve our doubts. I cannot see, on the other hand, what practical consequences would follow from deciding one way or another *at the time* in question whether we were awake or dreaming.

But while the question never actually arises *during* any piece of experience, we can certainly, in some cases at least, doubt whether an experience we recollect was dreamt or not. To become autobiographical again, I have on several occasions been in doubt when remembering a past experience. Sometimes

I have been able to resolve my doubt satisfactorily by suitable enquiry; in other cases I might have done so if I had been sufficiently interested to do so; and in a small number of cases I cannot see how I can in fact resolve my doubt because to do so would require the testimony of people now dead.

But in all the doubtful instances I recollect the experiences in question have been separated from my present experiencing by greater or lesser periods of time and there has not been on the face of it any undeniable continuity with my present experience. But at least part of the process of resolving my doubt has consisted in establishing good grounds for believing that any given experience is or is not continuous with (or congruent with) my present experience. Where a given experience, say of a few seconds ago, is evidently continuous with my present experience I experience no doubt whatsoever.

It seems therefore that part of the grounds for Descartes's claim that he is doubtful whether he is awake or dreaming may well consist in a confusion between a characteristic possessed by an experience remembered *quâ* remembered and the original experience when it was actually had. To suppose this possible would be in accordance with the suggestion made above, namely that to doubt whether one was dreaming or waking would imply that one somehow stood outside the experience in question. In recollection one does in a way stand outside the recollected experience.

There is an interesting borderline experience where one is aware of two levels of experience, the dreaming and the waking. One has this experience sometimes in the transition between dreaming and just waking up. If one's dream is pleasant one seems to be able to postpone full waking to some extent, while if it is unpleasant one seems to be able to hasten the process of transition. In such cases, so far as I can see, one knows which level is which and one is never in any doubt, nor do the two levels get mixed. This would seem to suggest that at least one of the levels of experience, probably the waking experience, was self-authenticating. I have not, so far as I remember, had a similar experience of two levels in the transition from waking to sleep.

I have suggested above that if ever the occasion arose to question whether one was awake or dreaming the question would have to be a "waking" question and not a dream one. Could one then not ask such a question in a dream? And if one could, what sort of an answer would one get? I think one might quite well ask oneself in a dream "Am I dreaming?" and

the answer almost certainly would be no! For one of the most characteristic features of dreams is that everything is what it appears to be. One never mistakes a cow for a horse as one might in waking experience, but a cow might quite naturally turn into a horse. Anything not inconceivable is congruous in a dream. There is not the contrast between things as they appear to be and as they really are. So if I appear to be awake I am awake. The question "Am I dreaming" asked during a dream would not be prompted by any dream doubt but would be the result of some waking experience where these words or similar ones had actually occurred, *e.g.* in reading or discussing Descartes. If the question were asked in the borderline experience mentioned in the previous paragraph it might be asked at the dream level or at the waking level and the respective answers would be different. At the former level it would be no, and at the latter yes.

It would seem to follow too from what has just been said that Descartes is not justified in labelling dream experiences as illusory. Illusions can occur only where there is a distinction possible between what things appear to be and what they really are. To talk of dream "images" as illusory is to confuse two levels of experience which are never in fact confused in the borderline experience where the two levels occur.

There now remains the final question whether we can apply methodological doubt to our experience so that we can suppose that we are dreaming when we are awake and that we are awake when we are dreaming. If it is true that, as we have argued, we never are *in fact* in doubt in this matter, can we nevertheless conceive it to be the case that we are, for instance, always dreaming?

Methodological doubt is possible only when it is conceivable that what I propose to doubt might be other than it seems to be. Unless this condition is satisfied no doubt is possible. If then it is possible to doubt whether any experience which seems to be waking is really so, it is conceivable on any given occasion that I may be dreaming. Is it indeed conceivable that I might always be dreaming? To suppose this possible would be self-defeating. For if one were always dreaming there would not be possible the distinction between dreaming and waking which gives these two terms the meaning they have for us. It is quite possible to suppose, of course, that our experience has the quality which we recognize to be proper to what we know to be our dreams. We should then be entertaining an extreme form of solipsism. Things really are what they appear to be. We

should have no occasion to contrast the free combination of images characteristic of dreams with the stubborn independence of waking experiences. But this is quite another thing.

The answer to our question seems to be that doubt of any kind, including methodological doubt, is inappropriate to the experiences of waking and dreaming. These experiences are self-authenticating, or at least waking experience is so. For it is only in the context of waking experience, as distinct from dreaming, that the questions we have been discussing can possibly be raised. It is only on the assumption that we are sometimes indubitably awake and that *we know* that we are awake that any critical enquiry can be initiated at all. Critical enquiry implies the demand to know what really is the case and consequently the distinction between what appears to be the case and what actually is the case. We know that we are awake when we are awake and we can contrast our experience with remembered dream experiences. When we dream the question does not arise and the contrast is not made.

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CONCERNING MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

By PAUL D. WIENPAHL

THERE are two views of moral responsibility which may be called the naturalistic and the non-naturalistic. According to the non-naturalists an individual is morally responsible for his behaviour when it results from a free will. According to naturalists the concept of free will is unnecessary. All that we need to know in deciding that an individual is to be held morally responsible for something he has done is: (a) whether his behaviour was performed without constraint by others, and (b) whether there is a reasonable expectancy that we can influence his future behaviour by rewarding or punishing him for what he has done. It is a consequence of the naturalists' view that only corrective or educative punishment is justifiable.

I

The purpose of the following remarks is to suggest a way of seeing through an objection to the naturalists' view which

has strongly influenced people to hold the non-naturalists' position. I say "seeing through" rather than "meeting" or "refuting" because the objection depends upon an inference from the naturalists' view which is valid but misleading. I shall call the objection the incompleteness argument. It occurs in various forms of which the following are representative.

(a) There are cases both in which an individual's action fulfills the conditions for moral responsibility set up by the naturalists and in which we would not want to hold the individual morally responsible for what he did. For example, we would not hold a child morally responsible for taking money from his father's wallet even though the child was under no constraint by anyone to do so and even though some form of punishment might prevent future actions of this kind. (b) A consequence of the naturalists' view is that justifiable punishment be of an educative nature. However, if we accept this consequence, then we must also admit that there is no difference between the criminal and the non-criminal. For our treatment of all individuals who violate laws will differ in complexity, for example, but not in kind. (c) If we accept the naturalists' view then to say that an individual is guilty is to say simply that he did in fact perform the act which we have suspected that he performed. But there is another meaning of 'guilt', the moral as opposed to the factual, a meaning which is often expressed by saying that an individual is guilty when he violates some law of his own free will. This is why confession plays an important part in the law. Ultimately only the individual himself can say whether he did what he did of his own free will. To deny that there is free will, or to say that the concept of free will is meaningless, amounts to denying that there is such a thing as a morally guilty person. There are only persons who do or do not perform certain actions without constraint and/or whom we can help or not to avoid such actions in the future. (d) The reason why we do not hold animals and little children morally responsible for certain actions they perform and for which we would hold adults responsible is that animals and children could not have acted otherwise. The logical analysis which the naturalist employs to understand phrases like 'could not have acted otherwise' will not *per se* suffice for this task. "For what we are seeking to know is the meaning of the expression 'could have acted otherwise' not *in the abstract*, but in the context of the question of man's *moral responsibility*. Logical analysis *per se* is impotent to give us this information. It can be of value

only in so far as it operates within the orbit of 'the moral consciousness' ".¹

II

The argument underlying these objections to the naturalists' view of moral responsibility is essentially that the view is incomplete. Its incompleteness is shown in several ways by these objections all of which amount to this: the conditions set forth for moral responsibility in this view do not enable us to distinguish between the criminal and the non-criminal, guilt and no guilt, and finally between good and evil. There must, therefore, be a meaning of the phrase 'moral responsibility' in addition to that which the naturalists give it and interpretations of words like 'guilt', 'good' and 'moral' which are different from the ways of regarding these words which seem necessary if we accept the naturalists' view. Since we often commonly say that a statement like 'he is guilty' means 'he did it of his own free will', it is easy to suppose that the concept of free will gives this required additional meaning at least to the phrase 'morally responsible'. For the rest, it may turn out that Moore was right that words like 'good' and its variants such as 'moral' are indefinable.

The strength of the incompleteness argument depends on an inference from the naturalists' view which is employed in the argument. It is not easy to state the inference simply, so I shall give a simple form of it which is quite arbitrary and then a less simple form. The inference is that if we accept the naturalists' view of moral responsibility, then there is no morality. Put less simply but more idiomatically, the naturalists' view implies that there is no difference between the criminal and the non-criminal, or between right action and wrong action, or between good and bad behaviour. There is only a difference between actions to which we are constrained by others and actions to which we are not constrained by others, and/or actions the future tendency to which we can influence and actions the future tendency to which we cannot influence (where those actions we would try to influence are those of which we approve or disapprove, like or do not like, depart from some custom or law, and so forth).

It seems to me that this inference is valid. It does seem, for example, that if we take the naturalists' view we cannot, as we ordinarily do, distinguish between the criminal and the

¹ "Is Free Will a Pseudo-Problem?" C. A. Campbell, *Mind*, Vol. LX, No. 240, October, 1951, pp. 457-8. Italics and quotation marks are Mr. Campbell's.

non-criminal. It also seems that, if the naturalists are right about moral responsibility, morality as we often tend to think of it would be non-existent. Is it not correct, then, to argue that the naturalists' view of moral responsibility is incomplete since it does not agree with practice in these matters?

III

In order to answer this question I shall ask you to reconsider the incompleteness argument in a slightly different form. According to the naturalist *A* can be held morally responsible when his behaviour is unconstrained and when it can be changed. The non-naturalists' objection to this is that deciding whether *A* can be changed in the future does not answer the question whether *A* is guilty. This is shown by the fact that we do not *blame* people morally whose behaviour can be altered. Not only do we often feel that it would be poor psychology to do so, but we do not feel that such people are guilty people.

In this form it may be seen that the objection relies on giving 'guilt' another meaning than that which is implied by the naturalists' view and which is furnished by the equation, 'he is guilty' = 'he in fact did such and such a thing'. It is the assumption that there is an additional meaning which is one source of the belief in free will, for one way of explaining the additional meaning is by the equation, 'he is guilty' = 'he did it of his own free will'.

From this point of view it is possible to see that a full explication of the word 'guilt' seems to involve the concept of free will. Similarly, to maintain that there is free will is to maintain that there is guilt. Contrariwise, to deny that there is free will is to deny that there is guilt in any sense except the factual one that *A* in fact did so and so. This in turn amounts to denying that there is moral behaviour.

Thus, the non-naturalist seems to believe in free will because he feels that by not believing in it he is forced to give up believing in morality. And whatever may be the difficulties with the concept of free will he is opposed to any solution to these difficulties which involves giving up the concept altogether.

This way of putting the objection to the naturalists' view serves to reduce the objection, for it makes it possible to see that the implication of relinquishing the concept of free will is not that there is no morality. The implication is rather that the words 'moral' and 'morality' have no special, unique and unalterable meaning. To put the matter otherwise, the inference

on which the incompleteness argument depends and which, in fact, seems valid should be formulated in the metalanguage instead of the object language. It should be formulated in a statement in which the word 'moral' or its variants are mentioned not used. The statement of the implication as it is used in the incompleteness argument is of the sort which Carnap called pseudo-object statements.

It is clear that, if the naturalists' analysis of moral responsibility implies something about the use of 'morality' instead of something about morality, the grounds for the incompleteness argument are removed. What reasons are there for supposing that in this inference from the naturalists' view we should mention rather than use the word 'morality'?

IV

In the first place, one of the sources of the present naturalistic view of moral responsibility is a logical analysis of the concept of free will. That is to say, the view arises in part from an analysis of words like 'freedom', 'constraint' and 'determinism'. One would expect, therefore, that any inferences made from a view to which this analysis leads would themselves concern the usages of words or be formulated in the metalanguage instead of the object language.

In this connection it should be observed that the naturalists' view does not entail the denial that there is free will. It entails the view that the phrase 'free will' as philosophers have used it is, like the phrase 'round square', a meaningless phrase. Hence, we should not infer from the naturalists' view that there is no morality, but rather some conclusion about the nature and use of words like 'morality'.¹

Secondly, the suggestion that the statement of the conclusion which the non-naturalist draws from the naturalists' view is a pseudo-object statement helps to clarify another but related disagreement in moral theory—a disagreement about the kind of "reasoning" which can be used in moral matters. This may

¹ It may be noted that naturalists in moral theory have for a long time so formulated some of their conclusions that their views have seemed either irrelevant or irreverent. By "translating" these conclusions in the manner suggested above they become neither irrelevant nor irreverent. Spinoza, for example, said that we do not have free wills and that in reality there is no good and evil, a view which was referred to as an hideous hypothesis. Carrying the confusion in language further, people said that Spinoza was an immoralist when he was simply formulating an ethical view different from the current view and was, therefore, just as much a "moralist" as his critics. More recently philosophers have said that the good is an object of interest or that the good is pleasure when they might have said something like "the word 'good' is used in situations in which we are interested in something" or "'good' is used in situations involving pleasure".

be seen by considering further the interpretation of the conclusion which I have given, that words like 'moral' and 'good' have no unique denotative meaning. That is to say, they are like all other words in the respect that they have various meanings which depend on the context in which they are used instead of one meaning which is fixed independently of context. If this be the case it would not make sense to speak, say, of moral behaviour without specifying (if there is any doubt—as there often is) the context in which you want to say something about moral behaviour.

Let us apply this consideration to one of the apparent conclusions which we can infer from the naturalists' view, namely that there is no distinction between the criminal and the non-criminal. The real conclusion should be that there is no distinction to be made between the criminal and the non-criminal until you have specified what these terms mean. Furthermore, if the naturalists are right, there should be many ways of making the distinction instead of none. And in practice in a given situation we can and do say that *A* is a criminal and *B* is not. What we can infer from the naturalists' view is not that there are no criminals but that it makes no sense to speak of criminals without first being clear about the usage of the word 'criminal'.

This is just common sense about word usage. If there be any novelty in it, the novelty lies in the extension of common sense to the so-called moral words. It may have been a failure to make this extension which resulted in Moore's notion that 'good' is indefinable, for if a word has many different possible meanings and if you believe that it has only one no given definition will satisfy you.

Now, however, we come across another form of the incompleteness argument, for the non-naturalist can say that these considerations show that the naturalist is concerned only with verbal issues and not with moral issues. The naturalist does not tell us what is moral. He simply tells us something about the word 'moral', and what he tells us does not help us to distinguish, for example, between the criminal and the non-criminal.

This form of the incompleteness argument carries the disagreement between naturalists and non-naturalists into another sphere of moral theory in which some naturalists and the non-naturalists seem to join hands and yet continue to disagree. For the non-naturalist goes on to say that he is interested in what is moral, and the naturalist often goes on to distinguish analytic or scientific problems from moral or

evaluational "problems" and to say that he is not occupied with the latter. He thereby seems to agree with the non-naturalists' view that moral problems cannot be dealt with by ordinary rational procedures. Some naturalists claim for example, that moral judgments are not propositions but expressions of feelings or attitudes, that is, they are non-cognitive. Whereas the non-naturalist says that moral decisions are a matter for the moral consciousness and not for the rational or scientific intellect. Thus, some naturalists and non-naturalists agree that moral judgments are in some sense non-cognitive, although they disagree as to the sense in which they are non-cognitive.

In dealing with the above form of the incompleteness argument (that naturalists are concerned with verbal not moral issues) I should like to suggest an extension of the distinction between the mention and use of a word. Or, rather, let us suppose that the distinction may be important not simply for one aspect of moral theory but for every aspect of it. For the distinction between mention and use by calling attention to words also reminds us of things. By this means the opacity of certain terms may give way to transparency and it may become clearer that the moral words are not in a class by themselves by having unique meanings. With this in mind let us turn to the specific form of the incompleteness argument in question and see how the manner of treating that argument suggested in this paper helps with the further disagreement about the nature of moral statement and "reasoning".

When the non-naturalist says that he is concerned with moral issues and not verbal issues, it seems obvious that he should specify what he means by moral issues. If the non-naturalist says, however, that what 'moral' means is precisely *the* problem, the reply is simple. For, if the implication of the naturalists' view is that moral words (*i.e.*, words like 'moral' and 'good') do not have a unique meaning, the problem about what 'moral' means is no different from the problem of what any word means. If the problem of what 'moral' means is no different from the problem of what any word means, then there is no difference between a moral issue and any other sort of issue *in so far as* we are asked to investigate any issue and *in so far as* defining a term is part of the investigation, as it often is.¹ That is to say, the processes of investigation in this respect will be the same for moral and other issues. From this it follows

¹ Mr. John T. Wisdom's essay, "Gods", is helpful here, especially Section 6. The essay has been reprinted from *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society in Logic and Language*, Ed. by A. G. N. Flew, Philosophical Library, New York, 1951, pp. 187-206.

that the form of the incompleteness argument under consideration fails and that there is something mistaken both about the naturalists' view that moral statements are non-cognitive and the non-naturalists' view that the "scientific reason" must be supplemented in moral matters by the moral consciousness.

The feeling that the word 'moral' has a unique meaning which for the non-naturalist is discoverable only by the moral consciousness has apparently, albeit paradoxically, led some naturalists to suppose that 'moral' has *no* meaning and has led both these naturalists and the non-naturalists to the view that some special sense or no sense prevails in moral affairs. When it is seen that the word 'moral' is *not* different from other words in the respect that it has a unique meaning, this important source of the distinction between so-called moral and scientific judgments disappears and with this disappearance the charge that naturalists are concerned with verbal not moral issues becomes non-significant.

Thus, another reason for supposing that the non-naturalists' inference from the naturalists' view of moral responsibility has been mistakenly formulated, although there is an inference to be made, is that the inference in its correct form helps to clarify another phase of moral theory—namely, whether the treatment of matters in which words like 'moral' are used can be "scientific" or "rational".¹ Both the dispute over moral responsibility and the dispute over the nature of statements involving words like 'moral' turn out to be philosophical rather than factual or logical. For each depends on a kind of verbal twist, although the twist in each case differs.

V

If it be correct that the moral words do not have unique meanings, it follows that phrases like 'moral responsibility' do not. With words and phrases there comes a time when circumstances seem to indicate that a new usage is required. At such times we find ourselves confronted with a question which is neither factual nor logical but "philosophical". These are questions of the form, 'is *x* *really* guilty?', 'is anyone ever *really* responsible for his actions?'. Ordinary research is not needed to answer such questions for we are already in possession of al

¹ Mr. Wisdom's essay referred to above is also helpful in this connection, since another aspect of the difficulties over moral "reasoning" is a tendency to construe 'reasoning' so narrowly that saying that you cannot reason in moral matters is like saying that you cannot be *certain* about anything. I am indebted to Mr. Wisdom for the distinctions in the statement following the one to which this note refers.

the facts and definitions when we raise the questions. They are rather like protests against an old usage and requests for a new.

As long as we believed in gods or a God in an experimental way and as long as psychological information was thoroughly inadequate, the old concept of moral responsibility worked. Circumstances have gradually indicated a new usage for 'moral responsibility' and the naturalists have, for all practical purposes, clarified this usage. Some of the motivation behind the incompleteness argument, therefore, may seem from the familiar reluctance to give up an old usage of a term, a reluctance which is understandable since any term is related to a family of terms. The family of 'moral responsibility' included 'sin', 'guilt-with-the-additional-meaning', 'free will', 'God's word', 'hell fire' and 'damnation'.

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MEANING AND CLASS

By F. H. GEORGE

CERTAIN aspects of language and logic seem to be a continual source of difficulty and discussion, these difficulties range over "analytic" and "synthetic" propositions, "meaning" and "likeness of meaning", "proper names", and so on.

I wish to discuss very briefly, and in general terms, certain aspects of these interconnected problems. It seems essential, initially, to appreciate the *conventional* aspect of the attempts that have been made to satisfy the needs of clarity and understanding on one hand, and to allow the establishment of a workable logical calculus on the other. The second problem, that of establishing a logical calculus, is not necessarily solved by one particular set of conventions, even though the first problem might be.

My attempt to clarify these problems will primarily surround the use of the words "meaning" and "class". The notion of "meaning" in the broadest sense involves "users-of-a-language" and words cannot be fully understood independently of the context in which they are used. The process of ascribing "names" to things or "properties of things" and using them in propositions, is the foundation of human communication. It is clear that any proposition that is seen, or heard, by a particular

individual may or may not have "meaning" in this "behavioural" sense (i.e. will not dispose-to-respond, or "cause" a definite response or some such criterion as yet not adequately formulated) according to the particular history and experience of the recipient. Lots of alternatives are possible in the context of human communications—propositions may be without meaning to the recipient, although "meaningful" to the originator, or vice-versa, and they may be either "meaningful" or "meaningless" to both. What logicians intend by "meaning" is usually something much more precise than this, and this precision can be achieved only by a *convention* as to what may be said, arbitrarily, to be "meaningful" in terms of the signs used, thus implying that "meaning" is a function of the propositions or individual predicates used, and these only; ignoring the various extra-linguistic devices as well as variations in historical and inter-cultural usage. Thus the inevitable disparity between "meaning" in natural languages and the convention of "meaning" in precisely formulated logical systems. I believe that the relative neglect of logic as an aspect of total behaviour is the cause of the over-verbalised confusion that has ensued; mainly since it is often supposed that "meaning" is understood in more than a conventional sense apart from the context of common verbal usage and of human communication. In short the two approaches are not sufficiently separated, particularly in ordinary language and in discussions of ordinary language.

The most important point is that of the vagueness that may be involved in the use of the word "class". In talking of "definite classes", or "indefinite classes",¹ (Indefinite classes while having great advantages, still use a form of class criterion) it is clear that a categorization has taken place and a name has been assigned to a collection of items that have some "property" or "properties" in common. Now it is particularly clear that in the assignment of class names, such as to all objects that are "red", there exist differences as well as similarities between the items that make up the class, and this involves even the "property" with respect to which the class is compiled. The process of naming all "red" objects implies the process of pointing at each and saying, "that is red", "that is red" and so on. There will be a process of deciding, quite arbitrarily, when an item is red and when it is not, and this can be settled only by some convention, not only as to what constitutes the bounds of "red" on the visual spectrum, but the

¹ S. Komer "Entailment and the meaning of words," *ANALYSIS*, 10-4 March, 1950.

conditions under which the items are to be viewed. This ostensive link with the wider context of total behaviour is also a stage in linguistic, or logical analysis, which in the limit cannot be ignored.

At this point I wish to re-consider briefly the word "meaning". In discussing "similarity of meaning"¹—this assumes that "meaning" is intelligible,—Prof. Goodman dismisses as absurd the view that the extension of a term is different at different times. This is a conventionally adequate proposition since he is referring to a particular class-determined usage. Prof. Goodman, in seeking to find criteria for "likeness of meaning", invokes the notion of "Secondary extension" which is the extension of any of the compounds of the "primary extension" of the term.

Thus a "centaur" and a "unicorn" have the same primary extension, although a "centaur-picture" and a "unicorn-picture" differ in secondary extension. This is indeed one possible solution by convention.

However, Prof. Price² has pointed out that such terms as Gloop-picture and Gleep-picture may have secondary extension and still be "meaningless",—this suggests that there must be some further convention with respect of "meaning" which can be employed to decide such cases, and could perhaps therefore be applied directly to "primary extension".

We might, as an alternative to the above, neglect the idea of an (absolute) class, with words (class-names) which have a time-less extension. This is not always necessary, but it seems that most problems which cause trouble in linguistic analysis, are propositions which involve the notions of "substance" and "property" (see Woodger's recent article).³ Instead let us consider events or processes, in a space-time manifold, where no two points ever coincide, and thus no two events can be exactly the same.

There will, of course, be possible classifications with respect to similarity. The idea of dealing with continuous "processes" which demand a continuous and infinite set of labels in our language-systems is then obvious, and ordinary language can be seen as a set of (arbitrary) approximations to the "ideal" language of continuous process. The fact that no two events are identical does, it seems, preclude the possibility of two propositions having the same "meaning" if one regards every usage,

¹ N. Goodman, "On likeness of meaning," *ANALYSIS*, 10.1. October, 1949.

² R. A. Price "A note on likeness of Meaning," *ANALYSIS*, 11.1 October, 1950.

³ J. H. Woodger, "Science without Properties," *B. J. Philosophy of Science*, 2.7.1951.

even involving the same words, as different. It is in terms of their temporal context that two "meanings" are not normally regarded as exactly the same, whereas in terms of a convention applied to the abstracted linguistic system, sameness of meaning can and will normally occur; although if two different naming processes are used to describe the same event they *may* not have exactly the same degree of generality. This is a matter that is usually contextually determined in practice. Thus "is a pelican" and "has a gallon-sized bill" have different degrees of generality, but may be used *in a context* to have exactly the same "meaning."

Into the initially classless world suggested above, we may introduce the idea of a "class", either strict or not, as an approximation. Propositions may use two different predicates to refer to the *same* event, in which case it may be that then, the *same* meaning, could be intended. Now, also, the idea of a timeless "extension" is replaced by a continuously varying one, to which we may approximate to a greater or lesser extent according to our region of discourse. Thus as a definite approximation, timeless propositions may occur.

A simple example from Russell brings out the limitations of timeless logic. "There must exist some man A who is the tallest in the U.S.A."; but surely since height is not constant, but varies slightly during the course of the day, the man who satisfies the above proposition may vary too, and thus we must add the phrase "at some time", or decide in some arbitrary way when measurements are made.

Similarly Woodger has shown that Napoleon, or Sir Walter Scott, is conveniently seen as a "process" varying in time; being made of "time-slices". This would seem to be a very useful way of surmounting the problem of the unitary nature of an individual person, and make for more precise statements.

Woodger's method of constructing a calculus is an alternative to the method of a calculus of indefinite classes. The calculus of indefinite classes allows an indefiniteness over "spatial" boundaries which is in keeping with empirical data, and leads to a precise calculus of imprecise relations. Woodger has attempted to surmount the arbitrariness of "class" by dealing with the items belonging to classes rather than the classes themselves.

Now the principal properties, necessary in any natural language and thus in logical systems used in empirical description—they are lacking in the propositional calculus—are those of indefiniteness of classes *and* the possibility of variation in time. Thus Walter Scott may be an indefinite class of infinites-

imal time-space-intervals, which may be summated in a variety of ways to give a conventional class description in a particular context. Thus again the idea of "class" is an approximation to "process".

Thus to return to Goodman's dismissal of extension-varying-in-time, it seems that it might prove to be just the change that is needed to increase the power of our language. The picture of definitions as approximate synonyms seems to be completely possible, since any of two events may be depicted in two or more ways any one of which say, is a shorthand version of another; then the longhand statement is called a "definition" of the shorthand.

Goodman's discussion of similarity of meaning in the context of ordinary language can be seen to refer to an interpretation of ordinary language that is determined by a rigid class-calculus that is remote from empirical description. Thus identity of meaning between predicates may not be possible in a language if the full context of the usage is to be considered, and it may not be possible to discuss similarity in terms of "extension" alone if a rigid class-calculus is the relevant interpretation. But if the language is abstracted from the context of its usage and the notion of rigid classes dropped, then certainly similarity of meaning will be possible. Thus finally "similarity of meaning" is a function of the convention in which "meaning" is described, and thus a function of the level of approximation, according to the extent that the predicates are abstracted from the total "behaviour" context. It is thus submitted that while Goodman's findings are consistent with his own convention, his own convention is inconvenient and actually remote from usage in natural language.

Again emphasis must be placed on the conventional aspect of such an approach as stated here, and indeed to all attempted solutions of such problems. It seems almost a truism to say that the word "meaning" is a word with an infinity of possible "meanings" and that conventions as to similarity of "meaning" imply a convention as to the use of "meaning".

The need for convention is clearly called for in view of the approximate and abstract nature of the problem dealt with. Thus our argument may be summarized briefly. Arguments over "meaning" are without sufficient definiteness, until the conventions in terms of which "meaning" is to be understood are made clear. Furthermore the rest of the apparatus of criteria for "similarity of meaning", "truth", etc., must follow, if independence of the context is assumed and independence

involves some measure of *approximation*—and these criteria will be a function of the convention adopted for “meaning”.

I have suggested that better conventional solutions to problems of “meaning” may be obtained, if the idea of “classes” is regarded only as an approximation to, rather than a generalization of, the notion of continuous variables-in-time. This permits greater precision of statement, since it is the arbitrary, and often indefinite, nature of classes that make them unserviceable for definite propositions, at least within the compass of a calculus of definite classes.

The difficulties discussed here have been noticed by other writers to some extent¹ and in different ways, without having reached an acceptable solution, and I believe such a solution has been held up by the pre-conceptions, and historically-given prejudices of some philosophers, who seem still to, court the hopeless ideal of “definite, universal, and eternal truths.”

The call is then for a further revision of the propositional calculus with a special reference to “class”, “meaning”, and the criteria used to define such terms and their usage: the full context of their use, and the special conventions that must be employed if the full context is to be ignored.

¹ B. Mayo, “Events and Language,” *ANALYSIS*. Vol 10, 1949-50.

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THE DEFINITION OF ‘MORE VALUABLE’

By MORELAND PERKINS AND IRVING SINGER

It is often said that attempts, such as John Stuart Mill's, to combine a hedonistic definition of ‘valuable’ (i.e. ‘intrinsically valuable’) with a non-hedonistic definition of ‘more valuable’ may be refuted solely on logical grounds. In this note we shall briefly consider the argument against Mill's procedure and then present an alternative formulation which meets the objection at the same time as it retains the kind of approach Mill desired.

In general, it is held, a theory of value is internally inconsistent if it both equates the valuable with a certain property Q and characterizes degrees of greater value in terms of a property or class of properties other than Q. Mill, in particular, defines the valuable as the pleasant, but then refuses to define the more valuable in terms of the more pleasant. Of two pleasant experi-

ences, Mill would say, that one is more valuable which is preferred by all or almost all of those who are competently acquainted with both kinds of experience.¹ In other words, he introduces a qualitative standard of excellence or degree of value.

Let us now consider the argument that demonstrates the inconsistency of Mill's approach. In presenting this argument, we shall formalize Mill's view for the sake of clarity and in order to show that a contradiction arises if and only if a very extreme limitation is put on the form of the definition of the term 'valuable'. We shall then be able to point out that by means of a relaxation of this limitation, in a way that seems perfectly compatible with Mill's intentions, no contradiction arises.

In its precise formulation the criticism of Mill may be stated as follows:

According to Mill, the term 'valuable' has the same meaning as the term 'pleasant':

(a) valuable = Def. pleasant.

But if this is true, then Mill involves himself in a contradiction when he invokes qualitative considerations in his definition of 'more valuable'. For in accordance with the procedures of modern logic the two terms 'valuable' and 'pleasant' are reciprocally substitutable in all extensional contexts. Consequently, *whenever* we have a sentence of the form (1) 'x is more valuable than y' we are entitled to assert a sentence of the form (2) 'x is more pleasant than y'. According to Mill's stipulations about degrees of value, however, we are allowed to assert a sentence of the form (1) whenever x is more preferred than y, even though x and y are equal in amount of pleasure or y is more pleasant than x. In either event, we may also assert (3) 'it is not the case that x is more pleasant than y'. That is, we can assert both (1) and (3). But we can also assert (2). Since (3) is the negation of (2), however, we can assert both (2) and not-(2). Therefore, the theory allows of contradiction and is inconsistent.

Now if the crucial terms are actually defined in the indicated manner, this kind of criticism is entirely valid. But, we suggest, the formulation employed is not the only possible one. Consider the following formulation:

Instead of (a), let us state:

(b) x is valuable = Def. x is pleasant, where 'x' is understood

¹ *Utilitarianism*. p. 8, Everyman edition.

to be replaceable by any term or phrase that functions as a substantive.

Now, a contradiction in the system does not occur when such a definition is employed. For, in contrast to (a), (b) is only a *contextual* definition of the term 'valuable'. That is to say, (b) specifies that the term 'pleasant' can be substituted for the term 'valuable' only in a certain limited context of the occurrence of the term 'valuable'. This context is precisely the one in which the term 'valuable' occurs in (b)—in other words, wherever it is preceded by a copula, which in turn is preceded by a substantive. The definition specifies absolutely nothing about what may, or may not, be substituted for 'valuable' in any *other* context.

On the basis of this kind of definition, which is widely employed in symbolic logic, we may eliminate our previous inconsistency. In the context consisting of 'valuable' preceded by 'x is more' and followed by 'than y' no licence has been granted to substitute 'pleasant' for 'valuable'. Nothing has been said about the meaning of 'valuable' in such a context. Therefore, when a definition of 'more valuable' is given, in *its* appropriate context, there is no reason to require the definiens to be 'more pleasant'. Consequently, Mill's theory of value, in the present formulation, cannot be shown to be inconsistent merely because 'pleasant' cannot always be substituted for 'valuable' within it. Finally, there is no reason to believe that a definition of form (a) is required to fulfill Mill's intentions or that (b) would not do just as well.¹

From the above analysis it follows that the definition of 'x is valuable' imposes no formal restrictions whatsoever upon the definition of 'x is more valuable than y'. The latter could be defined in any manner at all without leading to inconsistency. Nevertheless, it is clear that Mill, like most axiologists, wished to retain *some* connection between the two definitions. Thus, he would surely insist that if x is more valuable than y, then x is valuable, and although he states that one experience is more valuable than another if only it is more preferred, it is likely that he would say that of two experiences equally preferred, the more pleasant one is the more valuable. With this in mind, we may carry our formalization of Mill's theory one step further:

¹ It might be asked whether 'valuable' means the same as 'pleasant' in this consistent formulation. If "mean the same" is taken unconditionally, the answer is "no". For the two terms are not substitutable in all extensional contexts. They do, however, "mean the same thing", in the particular context specified, in the sense that they are substitutable for each other in such a context and in the sense that statements of the form 'x is valuable if and only if x is pleasant' will always be certifiable as true on logical grounds alone.

(c) x is more valuable than y = Def. (x is pleasant) and ((x is more preferred than y) or (x is equally as preferred as, but more pleasant than, y)).

The first clause of the definiens—' x is pleasant'—is required because otherwise an experience that was not "valuable" (since not pleasant) might still be "more valuable" than one that was "valuable". By including the first clause in definition (c) we bring it into the desired connection with definition (b). By means of the two definitions, a theorist like Mill can validly maintain that pleasure is both a necessary and sufficient condition for the mere occurrence of value but that degree of value is a function of degree of preference as well as degree of pleasure.

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A NOTE ON KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

By RICHARD TAYLOR

M^R. HARRISON¹ has directed an array of criticisms at Norman Malcolm's 'Knowledge and Belief',² but he does not put his finger on what appears to me as the real difficulty, viz., Malcolm's various formulations of the reflective *test* of knowing.

1. According to Malcolm, if one knows p , in the "strong" sense, then p could not turn out to be false (pp. 183, 184).³ If, on the other hand, p is false, then however good one's evidence for it, and with whatever conviction it is held, it is at best only knowledge in the "weak" sense, (pp. 179, 180). Hence, from any statement of the form "A knows p ", we can conclude that p is true, if and only if "know" is used in the strong sense.

2. Further according to Malcolm, one always *can* discover by reflection, or "in himself", that he knows something in the strong sense. For the reflective test of this is simply whether he would now *call* anything evidence against it, (pp. 181, 186, 189), whether he would now permit anything *to count* against it, (pp. 181, 183), whether he would *look upon* anything as tending to refute it, (*ibid.*), or whether anything would now *be considered* by him as disproving it, (p. 186), whether he would *concede*, or *admit*, that he might be mistaken, (p. 183), whether he could now *be persuaded* that any future experience might refute him,

¹ "Mr. Malcolm on Knowledge and Belief." *ANALYSIS* 13 (1953).

² *Mind* 61 (1952).

³ All references are to Malcolm's paper.

(p. 187)—whether, in short, he “ regards the matter as open to any question ”, (p. 183).

3. From this there follows the disastrous consequence that we can verify any statement whatever—e.g., “ God exists ”—merely by finding someone (anyone) whose attitude towards it is such as Malcolm describes.

4. Now there is, of course, someone in nearly any village whose conviction that, say, God exists, is such that he “ should not call anything proof or evidence of its falsity ”, (p. 189), someone who thus would ‘ not admit that [it] could turn out to be false ’ or “ that any future investigation could refute it or cast doubt on it ”, (p. 183). Hence, it must follow that he knows this, in the strong sense. And it must further follow that God does exist.

5. It would be no reply to suggest that such a person might not really know this proposition in Malcolm’s “ strong sense ”, for by Malcolm’s own much iterated criterion, he *does*—and moreover can know that he does, “ by reflection ”.

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CORRECTIONS—VOL. 13

p. 94, line 28, from top—For, ‘ the form “ that is . . . ” is both a description and a . . . read, ‘ the form “ — that is . . . ” is both a — description and a . . .

p. 94, footnote, line 1—Delete initial quotes.

Do., line 4—For, centaur-pictures, read, centaur pictures.

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NOTES

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